



CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS: FAIRNESS. DIGNITY. RESPECT.

by Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott

ALL CRIME VICTIMS DESERVE TO BE TREATED fairly, respectfully – and in a way that preserves their dignity. Fortunately, victims' rights laws and the State of Texas' extensive network of victim support services embody these ideals.

This year's National Crime Victims' Rights Week theme, "Crime Victims' Rights: Fairness. Dignity. Respect.," encourages us all to raise awareness about these foundational principles – and to continue striving to ensure that all crime victims are still treated with fairness, dignity and respect.

Many Texans know someone who has been a victim of crime. Yet, too few know that the law protects and serves victims by giving them rights – rights that we highlight during National Crime Victims' Rights Week, but that may apply throughout the year.

Crime victim advocates work tirelessly to give Texas crime victims a voice and to help crime victims and their families understand the rights they are guaranteed under the Texas criminal justice system. One of the fundamental

rights afforded to Texas crime victims is the right to compensation.

Every law enforcement agency in the state is required to provide crime victims with information about the Texas Crime Victims' Compensation (CVC) Program and an application for financial assistance. Applications also may be found at local hospitals and medical centers. Victims and survivors can also contact the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) directly for an application.

The Texas Legislature established the Compensation to Victims of Crime Fund to help victims and their families when they cannot afford the financial cost of crime. Funded by convicted criminals' fees, court costs and restitution, the CVC Program is available to help eligible victims and their families that have no other means of financial support. The CVC Program is intended to offset victims' out-of-pocket expenses that stem from violent crime.

Last year, the OAG, which administers the CVC Program,

received more than 38,000 applications for assistance and awarded more than \$76 million in benefits to victims and their families. We also distributed more than \$40 million in grants to nonprofit organizations and public entities that provide emergency shelter, crisis counseling, court accompaniment and other victim assistance.

Violent crime is often accompanied by extraordinary physical, emotional and financial suffering. Despite the enormous difficulties they face, countless crime victims successfully work to overcome these senseless acts of violence. It is a testimony to the human spirit's resilience and the strength of individuals that so many crime victims manage to rebuild their lives.

National Crime Victims' Rights Week gives all Texans the opportunity to participate in community events that honor victims and survivors of crime. By observing this important week, Texans have the opportunity to join the fight for fairness, dignity and respect for all.

POINTS TO REMEMBER



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The Crime Victims' Compensation Program reimburses out-of-pocket expenses to victims of violent crime and their families. Expenses covered by the CVC Program may include:

- funeral costs
- medical and counseling costs
- child care
- relocation expenses for sexual assault victims attacked in their homes and for family violence victims

For more information on the Office of the Attorney General's Crime Victims' Compensation Program, contact:

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For more information about this and other topics, visit the Office of the Attorney General online at www.texasattorneygeneral.gov.



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